

Appl. No. : 09/377,322
Filed : August 19, 1999

Amended
55. (New) The method of Claim 53, further comprising, in response to detecting that the item has been purchased by the second user, providing an option to the first user to send a message to the second user.

REMARKS

The foregoing amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on March 1, 2002. Applicants' representative would like to thank Examiner Haq for the courtesy he extended during the telephone interview conducted on April 15, 2002.

By the foregoing amendment, the specification has been amended to overcome the objections to the drawings and the disclosure, to correct several typographical errors discovered during a review of the application, and to reflect the issuance of the incorporated-by-reference patent application. In addition, the claims have been amended along the lines generally discussed during the interview.

The language "associated with the first user" has been included in many of the independent claims in order to cover embodiments and instances in which the first user is associated with, but is not a member of, the subject community or group. In one such embodiment, described at page 24, line 19 to page 25, line 7 of the application, the community is made up of some or all of the contacts listed in the subject user's electronic address book. Applicants have also added several new dependent claims, and one independent claim, that are directed to aspects of this address-book-based embodiment.

Applicants submit that the claims, as amended, are patentably distinct from the cited art. The amendments to Claim 1 are believed to overcome the section 112 rejection of Claims 10 and 11.

The revisions to the disclosure and to the original claims are shown in redline form on the attached pages.

No new matter has been added by this amendment. New Claims 27, 32, 35, 37, 38, and 51-55 are supported by the disclosure at page 24, line 19 to page 25, line 7, mentioned above. New dependent Claims 26, 31, 34, 44 and 50 are supported by the disclosure at page 10, lines 21-31 of the application.

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If any issues remain which can potentially be resolved by telephone, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney of record at his direct dial number of 949-721-2950.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: 4-16-02

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

The paragraph beginning at page 2, line 13 has been revised as follows:

One problem with the above-described methods is that they fail to take into consideration the level of acceptance the merchant's products have attained within specific user communities. As a result, products that are very popular within the communities to which the user belongs or is affiliated may never be called to the user's attention. For example, a programming book that has attained disparate popularity among [Microsoft] Microsoft™ Corporation programmers may never be called to the attention of other programmers, including other programmers at [Microsoft] Microsoft™ Corporation. Even where such products are known to the user, the user's ignorance of a product's level of acceptance within specific communities, and/or the user's inability to communicate with users who are familiar with the product, can contribute to a poor purchase decision.

The paragraph beginning at page 7, line 3 has been revised as follows:

The Community Interests services operate generally by tracking purchases of books within particular user communities, and using this information to assist potential customers in locating and evaluating book titles. The services can also be used with other types of products. The communities preferably include both "explicit membership communities" that users actively join, and "implicit membership communities" that are [computer] computed or otherwise identified from information known about the user (e.g., stored in the user database). Examples of implicit membership communities include domain-based communities such as *Microsoft.com Users* and geographic region base communities such as *New Orleans Area Residents*; memberships to these two types of communities may be determined from user email addresses and shipping addresses, respectively.

The paragraph beginning at page 11, line 8, has been revised as follows:

When the user selects the submit button 46, the user may be asked certain questions that pertain to the selected communities, such as university graduation dates and majors. The user may also be prompted to enter authentication information that is specific to one or more of the selected communities. For example, the user may be asked to enter a community password (even if the

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community is not private), or may be asked a question that all members of the group are able to answer. A community may also have a designated "group administrator" that has the authority to remove unauthorized and disruptive users from the group.

The paragraph beginning at page 15, line 21 has been revised as follows:

Figure 5 illustrates a set of Web site system components that may be used to implement the above-described features. The Web site system includes a Web server 76 which accesses a database 78 of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and related content. The HTML database 78 contains, among other things, the basic HTML documents used to generate the personalized sign-up, community bestsellers, and product detail pages of Figures 1-3. The Web server 76 accesses service code 80, which in-turn accesses a user database 82, a community database 84, a bibliographic database of product data (not shown), and a database or other repository of community data 86. The various databases are shown separately in Figure [1] 5 for purposes of illustration, but may in practice be combined within one or more larger database systems. The service code 80 and other executable components may, for example, run on one or more Unix or Windows NT based servers and/or workstations.

The paragraph beginning at page 21, line 4 has been revised as follows:

The next step 124 involves generating the bestseller lists for each of the selected communities. This process is illustrated by Figure 7B and is described below. In step 126, the process identifies any communities that are related to the user's base communities, so that these related communities can be displayed within or at the top of the drop-down list 50 (Figure 2). Any composite community which includes one of the user's base communities may automatically be included in this list. In addition, information stored in the community database 84 may be used to identify related base communities. In other implementations, this step [124] 126 may be omitted. Finally, in step 128, the bestseller lists and the list of related communities are incorporated into the community bestsellers page.

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The paragraph beginning at page 22, line 13 has been revised as follows:

Figure 8 illustrates the steps that are performed by the product detail page process 80C to generate detail pages (as in Figure 3) for participants in the Contact Information Exchange program. As indicated above, product detail pages can be accessed using any of the site's navigation methods, such as conducting a search for a title. In step 150, a list of the base communities of which the user is a member is obtained — either from a browser cookie or from the user database 82. In step 152, for [For] each base community in this list, that community's product-to-member mapping table 86B (Figure 5) is accessed to identify any other users within the community that have purchased the product. In step 154, the contact information for each such user is read from the table 86B or from the user database 82. In step 156, the contact information and associated base community names are incorporated into the product's detail page. As indicated above, an option may additionally or alternatively be provided for the requester of the page to chat with any such other users that are currently online.

The paragraph beginning at page 24, line 19 has been revised as follows:

The various community-related features described above can also be implemented in the context of a network-based personal information management system. One such system is implemented through the Web site of PlanetAll (www.planetall.com). Using this system, users can join various online communities and can selectively add members of such communities to a virtual, personal address book. In addition, each user can selectively expose his or her own personal information to other community members on a user-by-user and datum-by-datum basis. Additional details of this system are described in U.S. appl. no. 08/962,997 titled NETWORKED PERSONAL CONTACT MANAGER filed November 2, 1997 (now U.S. Patent No. 6,269,369), the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

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The originally-filed claims have been revised as follows:

1. (Amended) A method of assisting users in evaluating items of an electronic catalog of items, the catalog accessible to users of an online store that provides services for allowing users to purchase items from the catalog, the method comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

[storing contact information for at least some of the users of the store within a computer memory;]

identifying an item to be displayed to a first user;

identifying a second user that both (a) has purchased the item and (b) is a member of a community associated with the first user, said community representing a subset of a general user population;

[retrieving the contact information for the second user from the computer memory;] and

in response to identifying the second user, electronically notifying the first user [of the] that the item has been purchased by the second user, and providing contact information of the second user to the first user to allow the first user to communicate with the second user about the item.

5. (Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein electronically notifying comprises **[incorporating the contact information into]** supplementing a product detail page requested by the first user during online browsing of the electronic catalog.

12. (Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein electronically notifying the first user **[of the contact information]** comprises presenting the first user an option to chat online with the second user.

13. (Amended) A system for assisting users of an online store in evaluating items of an electronic catalog of items, the system comprising:

a data structure which maps items from the catalog to users that have purchased such items; and

a personalization process which responds to an online request by a first user to view a description of an item from the catalog by at least (a) accessing the data structure to identify a second user that both has purchased the item and is a member of a community associated with the first user, and (b) displaying contact information of the second user to

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the first user in conjunction with the description of the item such that the contact information is presented to the second user during browsing of the electronic catalog.

18. (Amended) A method of assisting a first user in evaluating a merchant, comprising:

identifying a community [of which the first is a member] associated with the first user;

identifying a second user that is a member of the community and that has engaged in business with the merchant; and

electronically notifying the first user of the contact information of the second user to allow the first user to communicate with the second user about the merchant, wherein electronically notifying the first user comprises personalizing a web page requested by the first user during a browsing session.

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